CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.720
22 September 1995

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND TWENTIETH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 22 September 1995, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Benjelloun-Touimi (Morocco)

GE.95-63904 (E)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I declare open the 720th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Before embarking on our agenda, allow me to say a few words on the occasion of the departure of our colleague from the Cuban delegation, Mrs. Magda Bauta Solés. As you know, Magda is leaving Geneva to take up important responsibilities in her country after seven years serving the Conference on Disarmament. We have all witnessed the energy and clear-mindedness with which she has upheld the positions of her Government in this forum. We have all appreciated the effectiveness and elegance with which she presided over the Ad Hoc Committee on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space in 1994, and the active role she played assisting her Ambassador when he chaired this Conference. Her professional competence and her human qualities have earned her the respect of one and all. On behalf of all of you I would therefore like to say goodbye to her and wish her and all her family happiness and success.

Following yesterday's plenary meeting I proceeded as agreed to hold consultations on the proposal submitted by Ambassador Ledogar of the United States on the question of the expansion of the membership of the Conference. These consultations confirmed the trend which emerged in the debate following the adoption of the decision on the expansion of the Conference and which indicates the absence of consensus on this proposal.

I now call on the representative of Switzerland, Ambassador Gyger.

Mr. GYGER (Switzerland) (translated from French): It is in my capacity as representative of the host State that I have the honour to take the floor at the Conference on Disarmament for the first time today. Before turning to the matter at hand, I would like to reiterate how important the Swiss Government believes the work of your Conference to be and that it will continue in future to do its utmost to offer the Conference as well as its members and observers the best working conditions in Geneva. I am very much looking forward to being able to cooperate personally with you.

Mr. President, I should like to congratulate you on the new dynamics with which you have been able to imbue the question of the expansion of the member States participating in the Conference on Disarmament. Through the decision that your Conference adopted yesterday, your efforts have been crowned with success. This deserves mention, particularly as you have succeeded despite the complexity of the problems. Yesterday's decision is a first step towards giving the Conference on Disarmament the rank of a universal forum. Through this decision you have created the basis on which the Conference on Disarmament will now be able to draw to acquire its full importance, and this is also true in the eyes of the Swiss people. We keenly hope that this decision of principle will quickly be followed by practical actions. This will enable the candidates for membership to enjoy all the rights and obligations of member States as soon as possible. You may be assured that this will encourage my country to follow with increased interest and commitment the activities carried out within the framework of disarmament.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Switzerland for his statement and the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I give the floor to the representative of the United States, Ambassador Ledogar.

Mr. LEDOGAR (United States of America): I understand your remark that there is no consensus for the initiative that I tabled yesterday, and while disappointed, I am not surprised. But I would ask that the secretariat be sure to assign the United States proposal a formal number and that it be kept before the Conference on Disarmament. I have the suspicion that even as there is no consensus on it, there is growing support for it, and it is a matter to which we would want to refer as we keep under review the whole question of membership expansion.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you, Ambassador Ledogar, for your remarks, and the secretariat is assuring me that your proposal will be issued and circulated as a CD document. I can assure you that delegations will have a very close look at your proposal and that it will be debated in due time.

(continued in French)

As I announced at our plenary meeting yesterday, I would like to put before the Conference for approval document CD/1346/Add.1, containing the results of the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban during the period 11 to 19 September 1995. This report was introduced by Ambassador Dembinski yesterday. It goes without saying that the secretariat will incorporate the changes contained in this addendum into the annual report of the Conference to the fiftieth session of the United Nations General Assembly, and will update the list of the documents submitted. May I take it that the Conference adopts this document? I see no objection.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I would now like to turn to the consideration of the draft annual report of the Conference to the United Nations General Assembly. This report, as contained in document CD/WP.466/Rev.1, has been circulated to delegations in all languages. This document is the result of our second reading of the draft report at the informal meeting on 14 September.

In accordance with established practice, we shall proceed to the adoption of the draft report section by section. Of course, the blank spaces will be filled in by the secretariat and the list of documents submitted will be updated. Moreover, the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban (CD/1346 and Add.1), which forms an integral part of the annual report, will naturally be incorporated in the annual report by the secretariat.

We shall begin with section I, entitled "Introduction". Are there any comments? There are none. Section I is adopted. Section II - "Organization of work of the Conference", parts A, B, C, D, F, G and H. Are there any comments? There are none. These parts are adopted.

(The President)

I now turn to section II, part E, entitled "Expansion of the membership of the Conference". In the light of the decision we adopted in plenary yesterday, I suggest the insertion of a new paragraph 14 reading as follows:

"14. As a result of intensive consultations undertaken by the last President during the 1995 session, the Conference, at its 719th plenary meeting on 21 September 1995, took the following decision (CD/1356):

"'The Conference on Disarmament, bearing in mind General Assembly resolution 49/77 B of 15 December 1994, decides to adopt the report (CD/1214) of the then Special Coordinator for membership, Ambassador Paul O'Sullivan of Australia, presented at the 660th plenary meeting of the Conference on 12 August 1993, and the recommended composition of the Conference on Disarmament attached to it. It is understood that, in accordance with the statement made by the then Special Rapporteur for membership at the 663rd plenary meeting of the Conference on 26 August 1993, this decision is in conformity with rule 2 of the rules of procedure of the Conference, which provides that "the membership of the Conference will be reviewed at regular intervals", and without prejudice to the consideration of the other candidatures to date.

"'Accordingly, Austria, Bangladesh, Belarus, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Finland, Iraq, Israel, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Senegal, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, Ukraine, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe will all assume together membership of the Conference at the earliest possible date to be decided by the Conference.

"'The Conference will review the situation following the presentation of the progress reports by the President on ongoing consultations at the end of each part of its annual session.'"

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): May I take it that the insertion of this new paragraph 14 is acceptable?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): It goes without saying that the subsequent paragraphs will be renumbered. I now invite you to consider section III, entitled "Substantive work of the Conference during its 1995 session". May I take it that this section is adopted?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): We have now completed the consideration of the draft annual report of the Conference to the United Nations General Assembly. May I take it that the report as a whole is adopted?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): Are there any delegations wishing to speak at this stage? I give the floor to the representative of Slovakia, Ambassador Krasnohorská.

Ms. KRASNOHORSKA (Slovakia): Mr. President, first of all I should like to express our gratitude for your personal courage and tireless energy, which you have displayed in large measure in the effort to deal with the present gridlock of the CD expansion. Your initiative to overcome the stalemate was a step in the right direction. Unfortunately, we consider the decision of the Conference adopted at the plenary yesterday to be unsatisfactory. We appreciate that many speakers, among them a number of the CD member States, expressed the same opinion and urged the CD to adopt immediately the following step. Unfortunately, in spite of the number of voiced appeals, once again the CD was not in a state to adopt a decision granting the candidates full-fledged membership. We regret that the United States proposal has not commanded unanimous support materialized in a vote. We believe that the proposal could put into practice the decision prepared by you, Mr. President, simultaneously meeting the specific request of Slovakia. We hold that this proposal could settle the whole overdue issue without further delay.

The fact that the CD failed to adopt the long-awaited decision obliges me to state the following.

The Slovak Republic notes the adoption by the Conference on Disarmament of the decision concerning the issue of the expansion of the Conference. Slovakia regrets that the decision was not followed by the second step, namely immediate admission of the candidate countries.

Slovakia therefore wishes to reiterate that it considers the adopted decision to be without prejudice to its request to fill the vacant seat left by the former Czech and Slovak Federal Republic. The claim of the Slovak Republic is a specific one. It does not constitute an issue of the CD expansion but a request for retaking a liberated seat.

Slovakia urges the Conference to adopt the decision, which would bring the whole issue to an end no later than by the beginning of the year 1996.

I would be grateful if the text of this statement is issued as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and distributed to the member States and non-member participants of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Slovakia for her statement. I would like to assure her that, within the framework of the consultations that the President will conduct during the inter-sessional period, the question of Slovakia will be studied in the same way as all the others, most carefully, and I am sure that all the members of the Conference will have taken note of your statement and your position. I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba, Mrs. Bauta Solés.

Mrs. BAUTA SOLES (Cuba) (translated from Spanish): I would like to take this opportunity this morning to say a few words as I take leave of the Conference. First of all, allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for the kind words you addressed to me. I would like to say to you and the colleagues that I will always remember with great satisfaction the way in which I have been able to work with each and every one of you, and with many of your predecessors.

During the time I have been in Geneva I have had the very special honour of inserting my country's position in the context of the Group of 21 and finding in the Group political, professional and personal affinities. The first task I carried out when I came to this Conference was to coordinate on behalf of that Group a subject which unfortunately has in a certain sense gone into oblivion, and not because of its lack of importance. I refer to the comprehensive programme of disarmament, which was honourably presided over by the distinguished Ambassador of Mexico at the time, Alfonso García Robles. I also had occasion to coordinate the positions of the Group of 21 on the subject of outer space and transparency in armaments. I also had the opportunity to participate in the negotiations on the convention banning chemical weapons and, as you were kind enough to recall, it was under the Cuban presidency that the Committee for the comprehensive prohibition of nuclear testing was given a negotiating mandate. Today the work of this Committee is the focus of attention in this Conference. In this same context I have had the pleasure of cooperating with the Chairman of the Working Group on Legal and Institutional Issues and with the Friend of the Chair, who is also my personal friend, for the question of the organization of the future treaty. The chairmanship of the Committee on outer space also enabled me to benefit from cooperation with many distinguished friends and the competence of the secretariat.

I have been in this seat for seven years. I have seen the blocs disappear and a world take shape which is in transition towards a still uncertain future. The blocs played their role in history. The desire for a world without blocs was the inspiration for the founding of the movement of non-aligned countries and its joint action in which Cuba participated from the birth of the movement. The existence of blocs was far from helping to shape an ideal world. Yet today, in 1995, we have to say quite candidly that the disappearance of the balance that formerly prevailed has not given rise to the sought-for security either. We are in a process in which our planet is following a course which, in our view, is a course fraught with risks. The present international situation, when analysed from the viewpoint of any problem area, be it economic, social or environmental, has a recurring feature

(Mrs. Bauta Solés, Cuba)

which is mankind's need to preserve international peace and security. This Conference does not need an explanation of the reasons for this. Among efforts in favour of peace and security, disarmament plays a crucial role and for disarmament the Conference, of which we are a part, is the sole multilateral negotiating forum, hence its importance.

The interests represented here are different, but all the countries in this world, which is becoming smaller by the day, are interdependent. The rich and powerful countries have a greater impact on world events than the countries of the third world and the consequences of this fact customarily have harmful consequences for the latter. Negotiations between groups with different interests should take account of the fundamental concerns of all peoples. World peace is indivisible and can only be lasting when it is built on the basis of equality, both at the level of individuals and at the level of nations. The change on the international stage will only be beneficial to peace and development, which is its sine qua non, when equal respect is given to all and when justice reaches us all. Neither peace nor security can prosper if decisions are imposed by force, in any sphere of life. Acquiescence is not always a synonym for constructive compromise. Conciliation is therefore inevitable for the benefit of all and I am sure that this Conference will succeed in preserving the spirit that has carried it forward to the successes which have punctuated its history.

Exposure to the intelligence and talent of all of you present here, both those representing your respective countries and those who are members of the secretariat, are the greatest treasure that I am taking back to my country. What I have learnt from you will, you may be sure, be put to good use. To represent Cuba in Geneva has been a privilege for me and I have tried to do this in the most worthy and professional manner that my personal capacities allowed. Once again I thank all those who have honoured me with their trust and their friendship, both the colleagues from diplomatic delegations - I stress - and those from the secretariat. With many of you I will retain for ever ties which are not only of a professional nature.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Cuba for her statement and I wish her every success. I give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, Ambassador Ledogar.

Mr. LEDOGAR (United States of America): I wanted to make a statement on the immediately previous item of the adoption of the report of the CD to the General Assembly. I would like to call attention to the fact that on page 13, paragraph 27 of that report we accurately informed the General Assembly of the sad fact that, on 23 March, the Conference on Disarmament indeed did establish a Committee on the agenda subject "Prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices" and that, unfortunately, the Conference did not appoint a chairman of this Committee. Elsewhere in the report we are going to refer to a document that was presented yesterday by the Group of 21 entitled "Statement of the Group of 21 on the agenda and organization of work for the 1995 session of the Conference on

(Mr. Ledogar, United States)

Disarmament". In a stroke of revisionism this G.21 document claims that unfortunately the CD was unable to establish any ad hoc committee other than that on nuclear test ban. As our basic report indicates, that is simply not true. It may be true that the same Group prevented any further action once the Committee was established, although everybody in this meeting hall was in favour of a chairman being appointed. However, there was never a G.21 consensus to let work go forward, but in its call in this document urging that the Conference on Disarmament establish on a priority basis in 1996 an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, I intend to keep in front of the Conference next year that indeed there was a Committee on fissile cut-off established in 1995 and that, as far as we are concerned, it will take priority before any other nuclear disarmament item will be considered. I thought it necessary, in view of the error that we were presented with yesterday, to call that to the attention of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of the United States of America for his statement. Are there any other delegations wishing to take the floor at this stage? As there are none, allow me to make a few brief comments by way of conclusion.

We have thus come to the end of our session for 1995. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some thoughts drawn from my experience acquired in the course of the past four weeks heading our Conference. I took over the presidency of this Conference shortly after having taken up my duties as head of the Moroccan delegation in our forum, and I could not resign myself to the idea that our Conference would not be in a position to begin its substantive work on all the items that it freely and deliberately included in its agenda at the beginning of the session.

Thus I witnessed the deadlocks which hindered all progress in solving our problems, and I followed most carefully the laudable efforts of my predecessors, in particular those of Ambassador de Icaza of Mexico, to break the deadlock that had prevailed since the beginning of our session. Like everyone else, I was tempted to explain our inability to find common ground on all the outstanding items, at least in part, in terms of the climate of uncertainty and nervousness that characterized the whole period preceding the holding of the conference of States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Like everyone, I was gratified that the negotiations on the comprehensive nuclear test ban escaped the attempts to make linkages between the agenda items of our Conference. Like all of you, I dared hope that the positive conclusion of the NPT Conference in New York last May would finally allow wisdom to prevail and create the conditions for a balanced and measured approach to the outstanding problems. This hope unfortunately did not materialize, for reasons which it is idle to dwell on. Some also felt that they could impute our difficulties to the rigid procedures of the Conference and what they saw as the opaque process of consultations among the various groups in the Conference, and therefore proposed that the President of the Conference should make more frequent use of individual

(The President)

consultations with all delegations, as well as informal open-ended consultations which would have the merit of enabling us to assess the positions of all delegations, and to bring clarity and transparency into our debates. I did not hesitate, because I was absolutely convinced in view of my experience at the United Nations Security Council in New York, to involve you all individually on two occasions in the course of the past few weeks to establish everybody's positions and to create the basis for joint action that I attempted to promote through informal consultations open to the participation of all delegations. This exercise enabled us to define the outlines of a compromise on the question of the expansion of the membership of the Conference, which we were able to consolidate in the course of the presidential consultations, thereby justifying the complementarity of all the forms of consultations. The step we have taken in the solution of the question of the expansion of the membership of the Conference, while modest, means that we have not been deaf to the repeated appeals of the international community, and will, I hope, pave the way for other breakthroughs on outstanding problems regarding the agenda of the Conference.

However, on substantive problems, it is clear that it is not so much our methods of work or our procedures which are an obstacle to progress, but rather the persistence of fundamental differences on what should be the priority among the issues that the Conference should address, and hence, ultimately, the role of our Conference as the sole negotiating body on disarmament measures, the place that the issue of nuclear disarmament and conventional disarmament should occupy in its agenda and its programme of work. In a word, the task involves nothing more or less than striking the necessary balance between the concerns and interests of the various parties in a world freed of the constraints of the cold war. And only if everyone takes this into account will we be able to make progress. Our resolve to ensure that the negotiations on the comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty are not affected by our differences on other subjects is to the credit of the entire Conference. It is encouraging to note that progress made in these negotiations under the calm and firm authority of Ambassador Dembinski of Poland and the entire bureau of the Ad Hoc Committee, despite the ups and downs encountered along the way. Equally encouraging is the solemn commitment reiterated by one and all to conclude the treaty before the end of next year.

My term will continue until 31 December, and I intend to continue my consultations actively both here in Geneva and in New York in parallel with the work of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in order to make progress on outstanding problems and to lay the groundwork for an agreement that will enable us to begin our 1996 session with better prospects. It goes without saying that, as I announced at our plenary meeting yesterday, I will also continue my consultations on the question of the expansion of the membership of the Conference and I will submit a report on this subject at the beginning of next session. I thank you in advance for your readiness to cooperate in this respect.

Before concluding, I should like to express my gratitude to all of you for your encouragement and your support. My thanks go in particular to the group coordinators and the representative of China for their cooperation with

(The President)

me during my term of office. My task has been greatly facilitated by the entire team of the secretariat of the Conference and the interpreters under the leadership of our Secretary-General, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and I would like to pay tribute to him for his devotion and for his effectiveness. Throughout the exercise of my responsibilities I have been able to appreciate the competence, the profound knowledge of subjects and procedures and the organizing talents displayed by our Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail. I have also benefited from his wise counsel. I would like to express my full gratitude to him here.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held in this room on Tuesday, 23 January 1996 at 10 a.m., in accordance with the timetable drawn up for the 1996 session. The last plenary meeting of this session is thus concluded.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.